

Item 9: Response to the Report of Special Rapporteur Doudou Diene

**Statement by the Delegation of the United States of America
Geneva, June 16, 2009**

Thank you, Mr. President.

The United States is pleased to respond to the report of Special Rapporteur Doudou Diene's mission to the United States of America last year.

My government welcomed the Special Rapporteur's visit and appreciated the opportunity for constructive dialogue. We arranged numerous meetings with various federal government agencies involved in enforcing the nation's civil rights laws and administering the myriad programs whose goals are the elimination of racial discrimination and the promotion of respect for civil rights. We appreciated the professionalism and intellectually rigorous approach the Special Rapporteur exhibited in the course of these meetings.

The United States also appreciates the Special Rapporteur's report and its constructive spirit. We note, as the Special Rapporteur did in his report, that the United States is profoundly committed to the fight against racism and racial discrimination, and we are aware of the ongoing challenges in this regard. As described in the report, the United States has made great progress in creating a legal and institutional framework to combat racism and racial discrimination, but we recognize that more needs to be done. We circulated his report to the various government agencies with whom the Special Rapporteur met and they will consider it as they review existing laws, policies and programs in the various areas addressed by his report.

Permit us to briefly highlight some initiatives that respond to issues raised by the Special Rapporteur.

President Obama is committed to reinvigorating traditional civil rights enforcement in the United States and increasing the number of enforcement actions in a variety of areas, including police misconduct and employment discrimination. As evidence of this commitment, the President has requested 145 million dollars for civil rights enforcement by the Department of Justice's Civil Rights Division in 2010.

The Office for Civil Rights and Civil Liberties within the Department of Homeland Security, which is charged with reviewing public complaints of discrimination based on race, color, national origin, religion, and other bases, will strengthen its various programs by hiring additional investigators, immigration experts and other personnel. It will continue to strengthen efforts to engage with various religious and ethnic communities in the United States who have been impacted by government laws and policies enacted after the terrorist attacks of September 11. The Office has also recently created a training module designed to enhance the cultural competency of DHS personnel, as well as state and local law enforcement and intelligence analysts. Topics of discussion include: misconceptions and stereotypes of members of minority religions; a how-to guide for community interaction; effective policing without the use of ethnic profiling; and the U.S. Government's approach to engagement and outreach.

To bolster enforcement of employment discrimination laws, including the prohibition against race and color discrimination in employment, the President is seeking a 23 million dollar increase in the budget of the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission. This would allow the Commission to hire more front-line investigators and attorneys.

As part of a renewed emphasis on wage protection laws, the President's budget calls for increasing by more than 280 individuals the staff of the Department of Labor's Wage and Hour Division. The laws the Wage and Hour Division enforce protect employees without regard to race or immigration status. In addition, the Division has developed a series of "We Can Help" posters that are available in English and Spanish and that are designed to increase the public awareness of the wage protection laws and the Division's services. These posters supplement

workers' rights cards, already provided in a variety of languages, to explain the protections afforded to vulnerable workers by the government's wage protection laws.

The United States continues to look for ways to support school districts seeking to achieve diversity and avoid racial isolation in its schools, as well as reduce the achievement gap between white and minority students. For example, Congress recently appropriated funds under Title Four (IV) of the Civil Rights Act program for technical assistance to school districts seeking to develop and implement student assignment plans to promote diversity and avoid racial isolation. And finally, the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act provides new funding to improve education for at-risk students and to narrow the achievement gap while stimulating the economy.

Thank you.